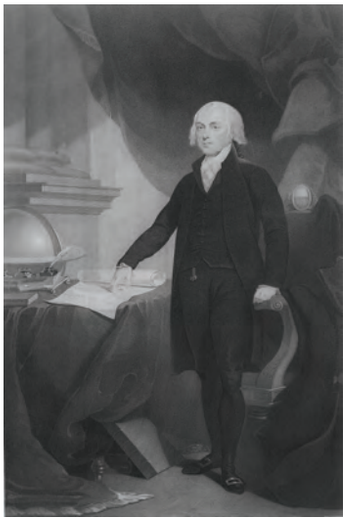
MAJOR PLAYERS



James Madison 1809-1817
Library of Congress
Prints and Photographs Division
Washington, D.C. 20540
LC-USZ62-16960
(b&w film copy neg.)

James Madison

At his Presidential inauguration in 1809, James Madison, a small, wizened man, appeared old and worn; Washington Irving described him as "but a withered little apple-John." But whatever his deficiencies in charm, Madison's buxom wife Dolley compensated for them with her warmth and gaiety. She was the toast of Washington.

Born in 1751, Madison was brought up in Orange County, Virginia, and attended Princeton (then called the College of New Jersey). A student of history and government and well-read in law, he participated in the framing of the Virginia Constitution in 1776, served in the Continental Congress, and was a leader in the Virginia Assembly.

When delegates to the Constitutional Convention assembled at Philadelphia, the 36-year-old Madison took frequent and emphatic part in the debates.

Madison made a major contribution to the ratification of the Constitution by writing, with Alexander Hamilton and John Jay, the Federalist Papers. In later years, when he was referred to as the "Father of the Constitution," Madison protested that the document was not "the off-spring of a single brain," but "the work of many heads and many hands."

In Congress, he helped frame the Bill of Rights and enact the first revenue legislation. Out of his leadership, in opposition to Hamilton's financial proposals which he felt would unduly bestow wealth and power upon northern financiers, came the development of the Republican, or Jeffersonian, Party.

As President Jefferson's Secretary of State, Madison protested to warring France and Britain that their seizure of American ships was contrary to international law. The protests, John Randolph acidly commented, had the effect of "a shilling pamphlet hurled against eight hundred ships of war."

Despite the unpopular Embargo Act of 1807, which did not make the belligerent nations change their ways, but did cause a depression in the southern seaboard of the United States, Madison was elected President in 1808. Before he took office the Embargo Act was repealed.

During the first year of Madison's Administration, the United States prohibited trade with both Britain and France; then in May, 1810, Congress authorized trade with both, directing the President, if either would accept America's view of neutral rights, to forbid trade with the other nation.

Napoleon pretended to comply. Late in 1810, Madison proclaimed non-intercourse with Great Britain. In Congress, a young group, including Henry Clay and John C. Calhoun, known as the "War Hawks," pressed the President for a more militant policy.

The British impressment of American seamen and the seizure of cargoes compelled Madison to give in to the pressure. On June 1, 1812, he asked Congress to declare war.

The young nation was not prepared to fight; its forces took a severe trouncing. The British entered Washington and set fire to the White House and the Capitol.

A few notable naval and military victories, climaxed by Gen. Andrew Jackson's triumph at New Orleans, convinced Americans that the War of 1812 had been gloriously successful. An upsurge of nationalism resulted. The New England Federalists who had opposed the war—and who had even talked secession—were so thoroughly repudiated that Federalism disappeared as a national party.

In retirement at Montpelier, his estate in Orange County, Virginia, Madison spoke out against the disruptive states' rights influences that by the 1830s threatened to shatter the Federal Union. In a note opened after his death in 1836, he stated, "The advice nearest to my heart and deepest in my convictions is that the Union of the States be cherished and perpetuated."

Source: The White House http://www.whitehouse.gov/about/presidents/jamesmadison

Dolley Madison
Portrait
White House Collection

Dolley Payne Todd Madison

For half a century, she was the most important woman in the social circles of America. To this day, she remains one of the best known and best loved First Ladies of the White House—though often referred to, mistakenly, as Dorothy or Dorothea.

She always called herself Dolley, and by that name the New Garden Monthly Meeting of the Society of Friends, in Piedmont, North Carolina, recorded her birth to John and Mary Coles Payne, settlers from Virginia. In 1769, John Payne took his family back to his home colony, and in 1783, he moved them to Philadelphia, city of the Quakers. Dolley grew up in the strict discipline of the Society of Friends (Quakers), but nothing muted her happy personality and her warm heart.

John Todd, Jr., a lawyer, married Dolley in 1790. Just three years later he died in a yellow fever epidemic, leaving her with a small son.

By this time, Philadelphia had become the temporary capital of the United States. With her charm, her laughing blue eyes, fair skin, and black curls, the young widow attracted distinguished attention. Before long, Dolley reported to her best friend that "the great little Madison has asked...to see me this evening."

Although Representative James Madison of Virginia was 17 years her senior, and Episcopalian in background, they were married in September 1794. The marriage, though childless, was notably happy; "our hearts understand each other," she assured him. He could even be patient with Dolley's son, Payne, who mishandled his own affairs and, eventually, mismanaged Madison's estate.

Discarding the somber Quaker dress after her second marriage, Dolley chose the finest of fashions. Margaret Bayard Smith, chronicler of early Washington social life, wrote: "She looked a Queen...It would be absolutely impossible for anyone to behave with more perfect propriety than she did."

Blessed with a desire to please and a willingness to be pleased, Dolley made her home the center of society when Madison began, in 1801, his eight years as Thomas Jefferson's Secretary of State. She assisted at the White House when the president asked her help in receiving ladies, and presided at the first inaugural ball in Washington when her husband became president in 1809.

Dolley's social graces made her famous. Her political acumen, prized by her husband, is less renowned, though her gracious tact smoothed many a quarrel. Hostile statesmen, difficult envoys from Spain or Tunisia, warrior chiefs from the west, flustered youngsters—she always welcomed everyone. Forced to flee from the White House during the War of 1812, she returned to find the mansion in ruins. Undaunted by temporary quarters, she entertained as skillfully as ever.

At their Virginia plantation, Montpelier, the Madison's lived in pleasant retirement until he died in 1836. She returned to Washington in autumn 1837, and friends found tactful ways to supplement her diminished income. She remained in the capital until her death in 1849, honored and loved by all. The delightful personality of this unusual woman is a cherished part of her country's history.

Source: The White House http://www.whitehouse.gov/about/presidents/jamesmadison

George Armistead
Maryland Historical Society

Lieutenant Colonel George Armistead (1780-1818)

On September 13-14, 1814, in the third year of the War of 1812, this Virginia-born artillery officer ordered an American flag raised over the ramparts of Fort McHenry in Baltimore harbor following a 25-hour British naval bombardment. The flag itself inspired Maryland lawyer Francis Scott Key to write what would become the National Anthem on March 3, 1931.

George Armistead was born near Bowling Green in Caroline County, Virginia, on April 10, 1780, to a well-established Virginia family along the Rappahannock River. He was one of six sons and three daughters born to John and Lucinda (Baylor) Armistead.

He entered the U.S. military in 1799 and rose through the ranks, serving at Fort Niagara in New York and Fort Pickering in the Arkansas Territory. He arrived in Baltimore in January 1809 to serve as second-in-command at Fort McHenry. In Baltimore, he wedded Louisa Hughes, daughter of a wealthy Baltimore silversmith. In 1812, he returned to Fort Niagara, where on May 27, 1813, he distinguished himself during the American siege of Fort Niagara by capturing the British flags. For his gallantry, he was appointed a major in the Third Regiment U.S. Artillery. Armistead returned to Baltimore in June 1813, and remained there until his death five years later.

Armistead's name has been immortalized in U.S. history because of one simple act. In August 1813, he ordered "a flag so large that the British would have no difficulty in seeing it from a distance." It was this 42-feet by 30-feet, fifteen-star, fifteen-stripe flag, made by Mary Pickersgill, that gave inspiration to the defenders of Baltimore and inspired a new national song. Ever since, he has been known as the "Guardian of the Star-Spangled Banner."

After the Battle of Baltimore, President James Madison brevetted Major Armistead to the rank of lieutenant colonel to date from September 12, 1814. Upon this promotion, Armistead remarked to his wife that "he hoped they would both live long to enjoy." Four years later, at the age of thirty-eight, Armistead died of causes unknown, and was buried with full military honors by a grateful city at Old St. Paul's Cemetery in Baltimore.

Two monuments honor Lieutenant Colonel George Armistead in Baltimore. The earliest, erected in 1882, stands atop historic Federal Hill overlooking Baltimore's downtown waterfront; the other, at Fort McHenry, was dedicated during the Battle for Baltimore Centennial Celebration in September 1914.

Scott S. Sheads
Fort McHenry

Source: Maryland Encyclopedia Online http://www.mdoe.org/armistead.html

Private, U.S. Infantry
by artist Keith Rocco (2002)
courtesy of Fort McHenry National Monument
and Historic Shrine, NPS.

The Defenders

The 1,000 men who defended Fort McHenry during the Battle of Baltimore were members of three fighting units. The first group were members of the U.S. Army "Corps of Artillery." These men lived at Fort McHenry and were paid eight dollars a month for their services. The "Corps of Artillery" uniform consisted of a dark blue jacket called a "coatee." It had a high red collar trimmed with yellow and a single row of brass buttons down the front. In addition, the men were given a linen shirt, one pair of white summer trousers, and one pair of blue wool trousers. A stiff felt hat, called a "shako," protected the soldier's head, much as a helmet would.

Another group of defenders was the "Maryland Militia," private citizens who felt it necessary to aid in the defense of the city. Militiamen were volunteers who were not paid until April 1813, when the militia was federalized for 30 days and released. From early August through September 20, 1814, the militia was given rations. These men came from all walks of life: bakers, tailors, shipbuilders, merchants, bankers, and lawyers. The uniform was a blue wool jacket with a red collar and cuffs, a white linen shirt, and white trousers. Militiamen wore large, black felt hats, trimmed in yellow and adorned with a large red feather.

The third group were sailors from Commodore Joshua Barney's Chesapeake Flotilla, which formed in 1813 to provide naval protection for the Chesapeake Bay. Sailors did not have a regular uniform. Sometimes, the ship's captain would decide what the crew would wear. It is likely, however, that many sailors wore blue wool jackets and vests. Their trousers, usually white, but sometimes blue striped, may have been made from linen or heavy canvas. Sailors wore hats that had been waterproofed with "tar" to protect the hat while at sea.

In spite of their different uniforms, the three groups of men had one thing in common— the protection of Baltimore from destruction. The bravery of these men and their skill in operating the cannons helped defend Baltimore. Cannon firing was a difficult and dangerous job. Artillery soldiers drilled long and hard, until they could load and fire the guns four times in one minute. There was always the possibility that a cannon might explode, killing the crew members. Often, men lost their hearing from the frequent, loud cannon blasts.

Source: Fort McHenry National Monument and Historic Shrine
http://www.nps.gov/archive/fomc/tguide/Lesson5.htm

Image from Library Field Guide No. 1

A Black Soldier Defends Fort McHenry

William Williams is listed with the names of other recruits on the muster roll of the 38th U.S. Infantry, and should not warrant a second glance. But this recruit is different. Williams was a 21-year-old runaway slave laborer.

No. 203 William Williams

William Williams, alias "Frederick Hall," ran away from his owner, Benjamin Oden of Prince George's County, Maryland, in the spring of 1814. On April 14, Williams enlisted as a private in the 38th U.S. Infantry. Federal law at the time prohibited the enlistment of slaves into the army because they "could make no valid contract with the government."

The officer who enlisted Williams did not question him. A reward notice, by his owner, described Williams as "a bright mulatto… and so fair as to show freckles." Nevertheless, Williams received his enlistment bounty, and was paid a private's wage of eight dollars per month, to serve five years or the duration of the war.

In early September 1814, the 38th U.S. Infantry was ordered to Fort McHenry where, during the bombardment, Williams was severely wounded, having his "leg blown off by a cannon ball," and died two months later. Williams was not the only person of color to serve in the War of 1812. There are numerous documented records of others at Baltimore.

Michael Buzzard served at Fort McHenry in the U.S. Corps of Artillery.

George Roberts, a free black, served aboard the private armed schooners USS Sarah Ann (1813) and USS Chasseur (1814).

Charles Ball served as an ordinary sailor aboard Commodore Joshua Barney's Chesapeake Flotilla, as did flotilla cook **Caesar Wentworth.**

Gabriel Roulson served as an ordinary sailor aboard the sloop of war, USS Ontario. Many other skilled free blacks, such as **John Allines** and **James Ambly,** worked as naval mechanics in the Baltimore naval yards building ships and helped build the city's defenses.

All Marylanders can take pride in the contribution of Williams, and others whose names may be lost to history, but who fought beside their neighbors, friends and owners to help save Baltimore during its time of crisis during the War of 1812.

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"A Black Soldier Defends Fort McHenry," by Scott S. Sheads, *Military Collector & Historian*, Spring 1989).

Prepared by Scott Sheads and Nancy Bramucci, 03/02/08

Source: Maryland State Archives
http://www.msa.md.gov/megafile/msa/speccol/sc5700/sc5768/pdf/blacksoldier.pdf

Mary Pickersgill (1776-1857)

Mary Pickersgill
Maryland Historical Society

Mary Young Pickersgill was born in 1776, in Philadelphia. In 1807, Mary and her mother moved to a corner rowhouse on Albemarle Street in Baltimore, Maryland. Mary worked as a "flag, banner, and pennant maker." She made flags for local ship owners.

Mary Pickersgill made the Flag for Fort McHenry in 1813. Following the wishes of the Fort's Commander, Major George Armistead, the Flag was made "so large that the British will have no difficulty in seeing it from a distance." The Flag was 30-feet by 42-feet. It contained 400 yards of bunting, and was so big that it had to be assembled in a nearby malt-house.

It was delivered to Fort McHenry on August 19, 1813. The night of the Battle of Baltimore was a stormy one, with rain showers and low clouds. The Flag flown at Fort McHenry that night was a smaller storm flag. The Flag that Francis Scott Key saw at dawn, from the prisoner-of-war exchange sloop moored eight miles southeastward of the Fort, was the large Flag made by Mary Pickersgill. It was raised at the Fort in the morning, as the British were retreating. A replica of Mary Pickersgill's Flag flies over the Fort periodically.

Mary Young Pickersgill's home is a National Historic Landmark, and is known as "the Flag House." People interested in learning more about the making of "The Star-Spangled Banner" are welcome to visit.

The original Flag is on display at the Smithsonian Institute in Washington, D.C. Mary Young Pickersgill continued a family tradition. Her mother, Rebecca Flower Young, made the first American Flag displayed by General George Washington. Mother and daughter are both remembered for their patriotism, and their skills in creating important symbols of the United States.

The Flag House

From the 4th Grade Resource Guide, The American Flag Foundation, Inc. www.americanflagfoundation.org

Francis Scott Key
Maryland Historical Society

Francis Scott Key (1779-1843)

Poet, lawyer, district attorney, ardent Episcopalian, and anti-slavery advocate, Francis Scott Key is remembered as the author of "The Star-Spangled Banner," the National Anthem of the United States. Key was a descendant of the Maryland Federalist elite of the colonial period, and moved in elevated political circles for most of his life. During the War of 1812, Key suffered the rigors of battle first-hand as a member of the District of Columbia militia, and there found inspiration for his famous work. Key was successful in the legal field, arguing cases before the U.S. Supreme Court, and was appointed, three times, U.S. district attorney for the District of Columbia.

Family History

Francis Scott Key was born on August 1,1779 in Frederick County, Maryland to John Ross Key (1754-1821) and Anne Phoebe Penn Dagworthy Charlton (1756-1830). His father was a successful planter, who served under George Washington in the Revolutionary War. Key was much impressed by General Washington, who visited his father's estate to acknowledge and thank veterans from Frederick County. He spent much of his youth living with relatives and attending school and college in Annapolis. Key graduated from St. John's College and began to practice law in Frederick in 1801. During school, Key became life-long friends with one of his fellow students, Roger Brooke Taney, future chief justice of the U.S. Supreme Court, who later married Key's only sister, Anne Phoebe Charlton Key (1783-1855).

While in Annapolis, he fell in love with one of the belles of the town, Mary Tayloe Lloyd. She was the granddaughter of Edward Lloyd, royal governor of the Maryland colony in the 1720's and sister to Edward Lloyd V, 13th governor of the Maryland colony. The two were married in Annapolis on January 9, 1802. Together, they had 11 children.

The Key family soon moved to Georgetown where Francis Scott Key began a law practice with his uncle, Philip Barton Key. Despite having fought for the British during the American Revolutionary War, Philip Barton Key was a successful politician and served in the U.S. House of Representatives. With his uncle's connections, Francis Scott Key soon established a successful legal practice. Under Presidents Jackson and Van Buren, he served as U.S. district attorney for the District of Columbia from 1833 to 1841.

War of 1812

As a committed Federalist, Key opposed the War of 1812 against Great Britain, and thought the invasion of Canada was a foolhardy venture. When the British Navy brought the war to the Chesapeake region with attacks across tidewater Maryland, Key joined the District of Columbia volunteer militia. His unit was a "flying battery" of horse-drawn artillery commanded by veteran officer Major George Peter of Georgetown. The artillery was mustered to defend the Capitol from July 15 to July 26 in response to a British foray up the Potomac River. Along with Key, the unit boasted many notables from Georgetown, including financier George Peabody. In 1814, Key served again from June 19 to July 1 defending the Patuxent River following the first Battle of St. Leonard's Creek, and supporting Commodore Joshua Barney's flotilla.

The role Key played in the Battle of Bladensburg remains controversial, but it is clear that he was not mustered into his unit, and was acting in a semi-official capacity. There is evidence to support the contention that he was an aide-de-camp of General Walter Smith, the newly promoted head of the militia. Key witnessed the destruction of the Capitol and other federal buildings from the heights above Georgetown, and returned home after the British withdrawal on August 25, 1814. Key most likely was involved with the subsequent building of defensive works in response to the arrival of the British fleet at Alexandria, within sight of his home in Georgetown. No sooner had this threat sailed off down the Potomac than he was enlisted to undertake a mission to secure the release of Dr. William Beanes, taken prisoner by the British army. Key met with British officers to help secure the release of Dr. Beanes, and witnessed the combined land and sea assault on the city of Baltimore. To celebrate the successful defense of Fort McHenry, he wrote words that would be remembered as "The Star-Spangled Banner" and become the National Anthem of his country.

Poetry

Francis Scott Key was an amateur poet, and his works were published by his grandson after his death. The popularity of "The Star-Spangled Banner," in combination with his reputation as an orator, brought him many requests to speak publicly after the war. He was also asked to write the epitaphs for a number of grave markers—a lasting tribute to his poetic ability.

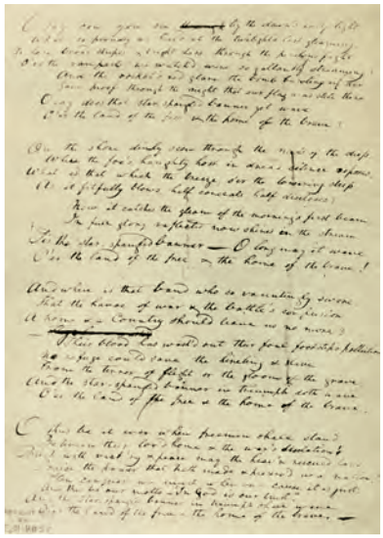
Slavery

As a slave owner, and an advocate for a solution to slavery, Key was in the middle of a contentious issue during a period of re-evaluating the benefits and costs of human bondage. As a lawyer, Key was involved in a number of slave cases on both sides of the issue. He represented slave owners in their battles over property rights and also advocated, without pay, for free blacks who were unjustly being sold back into slavery. Key joined the growing colonization movement that sought to establish African colonies where American slaves and free blacks could form an enlightened black republic. In December 1816, Key was on the committee that wrote the constitution of the American Colonization Society, and later became a member of its board of managers. In early 1819, Key was chosen as one of thirteen collections agents who were tasked with trying to raise money to pay for the cost of starting the colony. Key called it "the begging business," and solicited money as a part of his travels. He remained involved in the colonization society for more than 25 years, advocating for the development of Africa, the suppression of the slave trade, and the use of American military resources to protect the new black colonies. Despite his advocacy for the colonization movement, he opposed abolitionists, and as the U.S. district attorney of Washington, D.C., went so far as to prosecute an abolitionist "agitator." Nonetheless, he emancipated his own slaves and maintained his free black servant, Clem, his entire life.

While visiting his daughter Elizabeth in Baltimore, Francis Scott Key fell ill with a cold, and died of pleurisy, complicated by pneumonia, at her Mount Vernon Place home on January 11, 1843. He is remembered with four national monuments.

Peter Hansell

Source: Maryland Encyclopedia Online http://www.mdoe.org/armistead.html



Key's original manuscript copy of his "Star-Spangled Banner" song.
Maryland Historical Society

Francis Scott Key and The Star-Spangled Banner

The Battle of Baltimore was one of many American victories in the War of 1812. It was made special by the words written about the battle, the Flag, and the feelings of people about the victory. The songwriter was Francis Scott Key.

Francis Scott Key was born in 1779 in Frederick County, Maryland. After attending college in Annapolis, he practiced law in Georgetown. During the War of 1812, Key was a lieutenant and quartermaster in an army field company.

In September 1814, Key was approached by friends with a special problem. A Maryland doctor had been unjustly arrested by the British, and Key was asked to arrange for the doctor's release. With the permission of President Madison, Key sailed towards the British fleet, where the doctor was being held prisoner.

Key boarded the British warship in the Chesapeake Bay, and persuaded the British to release the doctor. Since the Americans might give information about British movements towards Baltimore, they were ordered to remain with the fleet until the Battle of Baltimore was over. Francis Scott Key watched the attack on Fort McHenry with the British!

After the battle on the morning of September 14, Key saw the Fort's Flag over the battered Fort. He began to write the words for "The Star-Spangled Banner" on the back of an envelope. He jotted down notes aboard the ship, and finished them a few days later when he returned to Baltimore.

The words were set to a well-known English tune, printed on handbills, which were like posters, and became very popular in Baltimore. Within months, the song appeared in newspapers, magazines, and books. During the Civil War, "The Star-Spangled Banner" became the most popular national song. It was used by both Northern and Southern forces, and was frequently used as an "unofficial" anthem during military ceremonies.

During World War I, a campaign was begun to make "The Star-Spangled Banner" our National Anthem. It was not easy to win Congressional approval. Many people thought that "America the Beautiful" or "Yankee Doodle Dandy" were better choices. The supporters of "The Star-Spangled Banner" worked hard, and on March 3, 1931, they finally won. On that day, President Herbert Hoover signed Public Law 823, designating "The Star-Spangled Banner" as the National Anthem of the United States.

Source – the 3rd Grade Resource Guide The American Flag Foundation, Inc. www.americanflagfoundation.org


PROCLAMATION
issued by
THOMAS BOYLE, ESQ.
COMMANDER of the CHASSEUR &c.
Whereas

Thomas Boyle's Proclamation
Maryland Historical Society

Privateers

Privateering developed when the need arose in a self-governing state for a naval force to supplement a small national navy. Governments licensed privately owned vessels (called privateers), crewed by private citizens to prey upon the enemy's merchant fleet. Without the official license, called Letters of Marque and Reprisal, the privately-owned vessel was considered to be a pirate. The first letters of Marque and Reprisal were issued by Mediterranean nations as early as the 12th century. In English history, Sir Francis Drake is probably the most famous privateer.

Privateering Technique

The objective of the commander (also called a privateer) was his enemy's merchant fleet. Because the only way for ship owners to gain a profit, or for masters and crews to be paid, was through the capture and sale of enemy ships and their cargo, there was no point in a privateer confronting any enemy cruiser (such as ships of war). The tactic of the privateer captain was to overtake a merchantman, fire off a broadside, and then attempt to board the enemy vessel, thus capturing both the ship and its cargo. If this maneuver was successful, the enemy crew (except for perhaps the captain and several crew members) was transferred aboard the privateer itself. The privateer commander would then place a prize master and skeleton crew aboard the prize, so that the prize might be sailed to a friendly port. This was the financial risk in privateering: If the prize (cargo) did not reach port for one reason or another, it could not be sold and no profit could be realized. Compounding this problem during the American Revolution and the War of 1812, was the fact that the British blockaded the major American ports. A prize master had to run this blockade in order to bring his prize safely to port.

Privateering: For Country and Profit

Upon arrival at a port in the privateer's country, the prize vessel and its cargo were immediately turned over to a representative of the local naval court. Next, a representative of the owners, known as the prize agent, would file a libel against the prize vessel and its cargo. The court would then examine the captured ship's papers and crew to determine if the ship and its cargo were enemy property. If the court found in favor of the privateer, the court would condemn the prize vessel and its cargo. The court would then sell the vessel and its cargo at public auction. After the deduction of governmental fees and taxes, the net profits from the sale were split, half going to the owners of the privateer and half to the privateer's officers and crew on a shares basis, which had been determined before the vessel's cruise had begun.

Privateering during the Revolutionary War

Between the Revolutionary War and the War of 1812, Baltimore, and especially the Fell's Point section of the city, was the fastest growing port in the United States. The merchants, ship owners, and captains developed a thriving trade with the Caribbean islands. The knowledge of this area made British merchant vessels easy prey for Baltimore privateers. At the outbreak of the Revolutionary War, the government of Maryland issued Letters of Marque and Reprisal. This function was quickly taken over

by the Continental Congress. Although records are limited, it appears that about 225 privateer licenses were issued to vessels registered in Maryland. One of the earliest and most successful of Baltimore's Revolutionary privateers was the schooner USS Harlequin, captained by William Woolsey.

Baltimore's most famous privateer during the Revolutionary War was Commodore Joshua Barney of Bear Creek in Baltimore County. Barney served on both privateers and Continental Navy vessels during the Revolution. In April 1782, when in command of the privateer sloop USS Hyder Ally, Barney engaged and defeated sloop of war HMS General Monk at the mouth of Delaware Bay.

Privateers and the War of 1812

With the outbreak of the War of 1812 in the summer of that year, Baltimore and Fell's Point merchants again sought Letters of Marque and Reprisal in order to attack British merchant shipping for both national pride and personal gain. Estimates suggest that over 500 privateers were commissioned during the War of 1812, of which at least 122 were commissioned in Baltimore. Fifty-five Baltimore vessels were lost to the British Navy or to the sea. The 250 private armed vessels of the United States captured between 1,300 and 2,500 British ships. Of this total, Baltimore privateers captured 556 British ships, of which 169 finally made it to port for adjudication.

Just how did the business of privateering affect the citizens of Baltimore? In 1812, Baltimore's population was 55,000. Between 4,250 and 7,500 individuals were directly connected with privateering. These individuals ran the gamut, from the great merchants who purchased the shares to build and outfit the schooners, to the newspapers who printed the advertisements of the sale of captured goods. With the Chesapeake Bay blockaded from early 1813, it was the money brought into Baltimore from the sale of captured vessels and cargoes that kept the merchant houses from financial ruin, and thereby kept the city from ruin.

Thomas Boyle
Maryland Historical Society

Captain Thomas Boyle

The first privateer to sail from Baltimore in 1812 was the USS Rossie, commanded by Joshua Barney, who would make two successful cruises before joining the U.S. Navy to command the Chesapeake Flotilla. The most famous of all the War of 1812 privateers was Captain Thomas Boyle of Fell's Point. Boyle would make three successful cruises in the schooner USS Comet, and then enter into his most famous privateering escapades aboard the schooner USS Chasseur.

While in command of USS Chasseur, Boyle sailed to the shores of Great Britain and announced a one-ship blockade of the British coasts. Boyle was so successful that the proud citizens of Baltimore began calling USS Chasseur "the pride of Baltimore." Privateers, like Boyle and Barney, all preferred to sail a vessel called the Baltimore clipper schooner. Barney's USS Rossie and Boyle's USS Comet and USS Chasseur were all built in Fell's Point by shipwright Thomas Kemp. On USS Chasseur's triumphal return to Baltimore on March 25, 1815, the Niles Weekly Register dubbed the ship, its captain, and its crew the "pride of Baltimore" for their daring exploits.

With the end of the War of 1812, the Baltimore privateer captains found returning to regular merchant service rather unrewarding. Their services soon found a demand with the Spanish colonies in Mexico, Central America, and South America that were seeking independence from Spain. About three dozen Baltimore captains eventually sailed for the colonies, through 1821. The most famous of these was Captain John Daniel Daniels, well-known for commanding a few Baltimore ships and as a hero of the Columbian navy in 1818.

Privateering eventually died out as nations increased the sizes of their regular navies. In 1856, the maritime nations of the world signed the Declaration of Paris that outlawed privateering. Three nations—Mexico, Spain, and the United States—did not sign.

Fred Hopkins
Linthicum Heights, Md.

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Source: Maryland Encyclopedia Online http://www.mdoe.org/armistead.html

Joshua Barney
Maryland Historical Society

Joshua Barney

Joshua Barney's life paralleled that of the emerging United States. He embraced the revolutionary cause at an early age, and interspersed commercial and maritime pursuits with service to his country, culminating in his volunteering during the War of 1812. A proliferation of periodicals during and after that war attests to the new nation's desire to extol its heroes, and Joshua Barney was just one among a pantheon.

Early Years

A seafaring life began early for Barney, who at 11 joined the crew of a Baltimore pilot boat. By 16, he distinguished himself by assuming command of a merchant vessel whose captain, Barney's brother-in-law, died during an Atlantic crossing. The nautical skills and commercial acumen Barney developed just prior to the American Revolution were redirected to serving his country.

As an officer in both the Continental and Pennsylvania State navies, Barney engaged the British in numerous battles, was captured three times, and successfully implemented a daring escape from Mill Prison in England. Employing several disguises, he returned to America, whereupon the state of Pennsylvania appointed him to command the USS Hyder Ally. While convoying merchant vessels in Delaware Bay, Barney engaged the superior HMS General Monk and succeeded through skillful naval tactics and a ruse to capture this British ship. Barney's wartime exploits established his place in the pantheon of American heroes.

Post Revolutionary Period

Barney's post revolutionary years reflected his peripatetic lifestyle. He undertook various business ventures, engaged in partisan politics as a Federalist supporter, and in 1794, almost joined the ranks of the fledgling republic's first naval officers, until a perceived slight forced him to decline an appointment. Returning to merchant service briefly, Barney soon succumbed to the lure of naval life, but this time as a commodore in the navy of the French Republic. No doubt, animosity toward his former British captors enticed Barney to serve with the French.

War of 1812

After serving in the French navy for several years, Barney returned to Baltimore in 1802 and continued a business career while dabbling unsuccessfully in politics. When war broke out with the British in June 1812, Barney chose privateering rather than naval service. His success at commerce-raiding was spectacular—capturing, during a 90-day cruise, some 18 vessels valued at $1.5 million. Why then did Barney, two days before his 54th birthday, propose a plan to defend the Chesapeake Bay against an anticipated British invasion, and offer to create and command a flotilla of barges and gunboats to serve as the core of that defense? Perhaps Barney was a true nationalist whose disaffection with the British, beginning during the American Revolution when he suffered three stints of British captivity, was never forgotten.

After spending nine months superintending the construction, purchase, manning, and outfitting of a

squadron of barges, Barney was ready by April 1814 to face the British forces in the Chesapeake. A far superior British force eventually blockaded and destroyed the Chesapeake flotilla. But Barney's loss of his vessels did not deter him from continuing to serve his country. As the British invaders marched toward Washington in late August 1814, the American forces hastily chose Bladensburg, Maryland as the place to confront them. Although the seasoned British regulars eventually overwhelmed the Americans, it was the contingent of flotilla-men and marines under Joshua Barney's command who stood longer than the American regulars and militia.

Barney's steadfast courage during the War of 1812 assured his continuing place as an American hero. Several engravings of Barney attest to his continued fame during the 1800s.

Lillian B. Miller, Dictionary of National Biography (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 17: 194.

Source: Joshua Barney's Chesapeake Bay Flotilla *http://mason.gmu.edu/~chughes3/images1.html*

Burning of Havre de Grace, Maryland
Maryland Historical Society

Chesapeake Bay Flotilla

The art of war is the same throughout; and may be illustrated as readily, though less conspicuously, by a flotilla as by an armada. - Alfred Thayer Mahan

Maritime issues of neutral shipping rights, and the impressment of American seamen divided Britain and the United States during the first decade of the 1800's and, eventually, led to war in June 1812.

The Chesapeake Bay's trade and commerce, and its proximity to the U.S. capital, attracted the interest of British war planners. By March 1813, the British Admiralty had sufficient resources to send a squadron of ships, under Rear Admiral George Cockburn, to blockade the mouth of the bay, and to raid the coastal ports and towns. From April to September 1813, the British Navy had free reign throughout the bay from Havre de Grace in the north to Norfolk in the south.

Except for the successful defense of Craney Island at Hampton Roads, Virginia, the Americans experienced hit-and-run raiding by British seamen and marines who formed amphibious landing parties to steal and destroy tobacco, grain, and livestock along the shoreline of the bay. Respite came only in September, when the bulk of the squadron sailed to Bermuda to refit and replenish. Admiral Cockburn left behind a small force to maintain the blockade of the mouth of the bay.

On July 4, 1813, Joshua Barney, an American Revolutionary War naval hero, proposed a plan to the U.S. Navy to build, purchase, outfit, man, and command a flying squadron of 20 barges to defend the Chesapeake Bay from further British incursions. While this flotilla's engagements at Cedar Point and St. Leonard's Creek during June 1814 did not stop the invading forces, their battles did divert British resources and bought some extra time for Washington and Baltimore to bolster their defenses. Faced with imminent capture, the flotilla-men scuttled their vessels at Pig Point, Maryland in August 1814, but valiantly joined the militia at Bladensburg in an unsuccessful last ditch effort to save Washington from capture.

Battle of St. Leonard's Creek, 10 June 1814
by Tom Freeman. Owned by Christine F. Hughes; Barney's Barge Sketch. National Archives RG45, Area File 11 (M625, Roll No. 405)

Source: Joshua Barney's Chesapeake Bay Flotilla http://mason.gmu.edu/~chughes3/projecthome.html

Samuel Smith (1752-1839)

Samuel Smith
Maryland Historical Society

At the onset of the War of 1812, Samuel Smith began repairs on Fort McHenry, instituted regular militia drills, and built fortifications. British Admiral George Cockburn blockaded the Chesapeake Bay in early 1813, giving increasing importance to Smith's defensive preparations. Smith established a system of coast watchers and scouts and began a successful search for large cannon.

In April 1813, Cockburn arrived in the Chesapeake Bay causing an initial flurry of mobilization, but it soon became clear he did not possess the strength to do more than scare Marylanders. However, the following summer brought a British offensive under Admiral Alexander Cochrane and General Robert Ross aimed at the Chesapeake Bay. These forces landed in Maryland, routed U.S. forces at the Battle of Bladensburg on August 24, 1814, and burned Washington, D.C. The British command then decided to take Baltimore. Samuel Smith, receiving word of the British presence, immediately began preparations, mobilized the militia of Baltimore, defeated a challenge, and ordered additional fortifications built. By early September, Smith had 15,000 men under his command.

The British, led by Ross (until his death), landed on North Point on September 12, 1814 with 4,000 soldiers and encountered a delaying force led by Brigadier General John Stricker. Stricker retreated to Hampstead Hill, a fortified position east of Baltimore, where Smith had stationed thousands of militiamen. Smith foiled a flanking maneuver and then positioned his troops so that a British frontal assault would be exposed to crossfire. Convinced the position was too strong to take, the British retreated on September 14.

At the same time, the British Navy attempted to bombard Fort McHenry, which, if silenced, would allow the British to destroy Smith's line at Hampstead Hill. Cochrane bombarded the fort throughout the day on September 13, but the fort and its covering forts (Covington and Babcock) proved too strong. The following day, Cochrane rejoined the troop transports holding the unsuccessful British army and left for the West Indies.

Although bravery and initiative in the defense of Baltimore were widespread, most of the credit for its successful stand must go to Smith, whose preparations, determination, and direction caused Baltimore to be too formidable an obstacle to the British.

Excerpt from Heidler, David S. and Jeanne T. Heidler. "Encyclopedia of the War of 1812." Naval Institute Press, Annapolis, MD, 1997, pp 476-477.

Related sites:
Fort McHenry National Monument *http://www.nps.gov/fomc/index.htm*
Maryland Historical Society *http://www.mdhs.org/*
Patterson Park *http://www.pattersonpark.com/*
Westminster Hall and Burying Ground *http://www.westminsterhall.org/*

Source: Star-Spangled 200 *http://starspangled200.org/History/Pages/Smith.aspx*